

Duxbury experienced building boom in 1997

By John Chaffee
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DUXBURY — It was a year in which Duxbury had an edifice complex.

Three major building projects were completed and plans for four more were announced.

The new Ellison Center for the Arts, a \$2.8 million joint venture of the Hingham-based South Shore Conservatory and the Duxbury Art Association, was dedicated in early February. The Ellison Center, which is in the former Holy Family Church building at St. George and Cedar streets, provides art, music and dance instruction to more than 500 children and adults from Duxbury and surrounding communities.

After a \$1.6 million renovation, the Alden School, which had been closed for five years, reopened in September for all 480 Duxbury pupils in grades 3 and 4.

And in November, after a \$6.3 million facelift, the adjacent former high school, which also closed in 1992, reopened as the town's new public library.

During the year, plans were unveiled for two projects at Snug Harbor: a maritime school and a new home for the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society.

In addition, Fire Chief William Harriman proposed renovating and reopening the Ashdod district fire station in West Duxbury and the council on aging got a special town meeting appropriation to draft plans for a new senior center.

Director of Inspectional Services Richard MacDonald said he was issuing permits at a "phenomenal" rate.

"People continued to do a lot of remodeling or building additions," MacDonald said, "and there was an unbelievable increase in Title 5 septic inspections and perc (percolation) tests."

Through November, MacDonald said, his department had issued per-



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mits for \$14,225,000 worth of work.

Meanwhile, according to figures compiled by the Bay State Multiple Listing Service, sales of private homes in Duxbury sagged a bit from 236 in 1996 to 199 this year, but the average price increased from \$296,400 last year to \$306,116 in 1997.

While five homes sold for \$800,000 or more in 1996, only one did so in 1997.

During the year, two Duxbury residents received bone-marrow transplants in an effort to combat life-threatening forms of cancer.

Brittany Lambert, the 11-year-old

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girl whose need for a bone-marrow match led to a highly publicized blood testing drive in 1996, received a transplant in March, but it didn't take, and she is due to repeat the process next year.

Frank Kemp, 52, received a transplant earlier this month after waiting nearly two years for a marrow match.

In February, residents of a number of subdivisions became concerned about the safety of their drinking water. Excessive levels of perchloroethylene (PCE), a possible carcinogen, were detected in the public water supply at various places around town.

After a study committee report identified the culprit as 25 miles of vinyl-coated cement pipe, a special town meeting appropriated the mon-

ey needed to begin a water pipe replacement program.

In early March, 28 Duxbury High School students were suspended for drinking during a school-sponsored ski trip to Maine.

Two weeks later, the annual town meeting voted to designate Duxbury as a community with zero tolerance for the illegal use of drugs and alcohol.

Although Duxbury continued to be rated one of the safest communities in eastern Massachusetts, the police department still made headlines.

In January, a new police chief, former Maryland State Police Lt. Col. Charles Mazzone, was sworn in by Town Clerk Nancy Oates.

Later that month, Town Manager Rocco Longo fired police Lt. John

Colbert for "irresponsibly mixing alcohol and a firearm" during an off-duty incident at his Sagamore home. Colbert has appealed.

In May, former officer John Harrigan, whom Longo had fired for off-duty drinking in 1995 but who had been ordered reinstated by the state Civil Service Commission, accepted a \$34,000 settlement with the town and turned in his badge and gun.

And in September, 28-year veteran officer Allen Gilbert, who had appealed to the Civil Service Commission after being passed over for a promotion in 1996, was promoted by Mazzone to sergeant.

Mazzone said Gilbert's promotion was "the fair, honest and decent thing to do."